

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 WARSAW 07186 01 OF 02 010939Z

21

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 095379

P 010902Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8234

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 WARSAW 7186

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ECON, PL

SUBJECT: POLISH DOMESTIC SITUATION

REF: A) WARSAW 6444 B) MEMORANDA TO THE FILE, 10/21/75
AND 10/23/75 C) WARSAW 6889, AND D) WARSAW 7044

1. SUMMARY. PUBLIC ANXIETY ABOUT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS--
SHORTAGES, RUMORED PRINCE RISES, AND POSSIBLE BELT-TIGHTENING
--CONTINUES. SINCE OUR LAST ASSESSMENT (REF A), THE
INTENSITY OF RUMORS HAS DIMINISHED, POSSIBLY AS A RESULT
OF REGIME RESPONSES. THE SPATE OF FIRES, REAL AND
RUMORED, HAS ABATED, AND, DESPITE CONTINUED ALLEGATIONS,
THERE IS STILL NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM ARSON. SPECULATION
ABOUT OPPOSITION POLITICAL ACTIVITY HAS DEVELOPED, BUT
THERE IS NOT HARD EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM THE SCATTERED
REPORTS WE HAVE HEARD. THE REGIME HAS TAKEN STEPS TO
DEFUSE PUBLIC TENSIONS AND ALLEVIATE SHORT-TERM ECONOMIC
STRAINS; IT APPEARS IN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION. END SUMMARY

2. THE WAVE OF ARSON RUMORS WHICH PEAKED ABOUT MID-
OCTOBER WAS FOLLOWED BY REPORTS OF AN ATTEMPTED
SELF-IMMOLATION AND OF A RASH OF KIDNAPPINGS.
GOSSIP THAT "GERMANS" OR
"ARABS" WERE BEHIND ALLEGED INCIDENTS OF
KIDNAPPING HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS SHEER IDIOCY BY RESPONSIBLE
PERSONS. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE HEARD ONE UNSUBSTANTIATED RUMOR
THAT A STUDENT TOOK A POTSHOT AT GIEREK SOMEWHERE IN
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PAGE 02 WARSAW 07186 01 OF 02 010939Z

WARSAW ABOUT MID-OCTOBER. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO

CONFIRM THIS, HOWEVER, AND WE HAVE SEEN NO SIGNS OF ANY SPECIAL LIMITS ON HIS ACTIVITIES. WHEN HE ATTENDED THE FINAL CHOPIN COMPETITION PERFORMANCES ON OCTOBER 29, CROWD-CONTROL MEASURES WERE, IF ANYTHING, INSUFFICIENT.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTS OF WORKER DISSATISFACTION IN THE WARSAW AREA AND ON THE COAST. ONE REPORT HAS IT THAT THERE WAS A STOP-PAGE AT AT A WARSAW PLANT BY WORKERS WHO DEMANDED TO SEE GIEREK ABOUT SHORTAGES OF FOOD AND OTHER ITEMS. A CENTRAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE APPARENTLY CALMED THEM AND ARRANGED FOR SPECIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE DESIRED ITEMS AT THE PLANT, BUT THIS SIPHONED OFF THESE ITEMS FROM REGULAR DISTRIBUTION OUTLETS, THUS CAUSING GRUMBLING AMONG THEIR USUAL CLIENTS.

4. THE SITUATION ON THE COAST REMAINS CALM. THE NORWEGIAN CONSUL IN SZCZECIN INFORMED HIS EMBASSY ABOUT MID-OCTOBER THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO WORKER DISTURBANCES AND NO SERIOUS SHORTAGES THERE. OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE AND A NATO COLLEAGUE TOURED A WIDE AREA ALONG THE COAST BETWEEN SZCZECIN AND GDYNIA IN MID-OCTOBER AND FOUND NO SIGNS OF UNUSUAL ACTIVITY AND NO SPECIAL CONTROLS ON ACCESS ROADS TO THE COAST.

5. IN THE WARSAW AREA, OUR DAO REPORTS THAT CHECKS OF MILITARY GARRISONS SHOW NO SIGNS OF PERSONNEL INCREASES OR ALERT STATUS. ONE POLICE POST HAS BROUGHT IN ABOUT 100 SOLDIERS WHO HAVE REMAINED ON DUTY THERE FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, AND THERE ARE OCCASIONALLY SIGNS OF ADDITIONAL POLICEMENT IN THE CITY, BUT NOT IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS. EXCEPTIONAL CONTROLS WERE IN EFFECT DURING THE POLAND-ITALY SOCCER MATCH ON OCTOBER 26, INCLUDING CHECKS ON VEHICLES ENTERING THE CITY. HOWEVER, DESPITE A BOISTEROUS CROWD OF 100,000 THERE WERE NO REPORTED INCIDENTS.

6. THERE HAS BEEN TALK OF INCREASED ACTIVITY BY POLITICAL OPPONENTS OF GIEREK (REF B) WITHOUT DISCOUNTING THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCH ACTIVITY, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE TO CONFIRM IT. WE BELIEVE THE SPECULATION IS ENGENDERED BY THE GENERAL UN-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 WARSAW 07186 01 OF 02 010939Z

EASINESS AND THE APPROACHING CONGRESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE HAD SEVERAL RELIABLE REPORTS POINTING TO THE EXISTENCE OF AN UNSPECIFIED GROUP WITHING THE TOP LEADERSHIP ADVOCATING A SLOWER PACE OF DEVELOPMENT BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER ALLEGED ECONOMIC EXCESSES THAT HAVE LED TO SHORTAGES, STRAINS, AND DISTORTIONS. WE BELIEVE THERE IS AN ONGOING CONTROVERSY ABOUT ECONOMIC POLICIES, PARTICULARLY CONCERNING PRICES,

INVESTMENT, AND RELATED ISSUES, BUT WE HAVE NOT EVIDENCE
SUGGESTING AN IMMEDIATE POLITICAL THREAT TO GIEREK ON
THIS BASIS.

7 THE LEADERSHIP HAS MOVED IN SEVERAL WAYS TO CONTROL
THE GENERAL SITUATION. BOTH GIEREK AND PREMIER
JAROSZEWICZ DENOUNCED RUMOR MONGERING IN THEIR REMARKS
TO MARITIME WORKERS AT GDANSK ON OCTOBER 13, ADMONISHING
THE PARTY FAITHFUL AND PUBLIC TO KEEP TRUST IN THE PARTY
LEADERSHIP NOW, AS THEY DID IN DECEMBER 1970. THE THEME
OF CONFIDENCE IN THE LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN PLAYED REPEATEDLY

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PAGE 01 WARSAW 07186 02 OF 02 010959Z

21

ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY WARSAW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8235

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 WARSAW 7186

EXDIS

SINCE THEN, WITH STRESS ON THE SLOGAN THAT THE PARTY HAS
KEPT ITS WORD TO THE PEOPLE AND HAS NOT FAILED THEIR
TRUST. IN THIS RESPECT, ADULATION WAS HEAPED ON GIEREK
HIMSELF BY KATOWICE PROVINCIAL FIRST SECRETARY ZDZISLAW
GRUDZIEN AT THE KATOWICE CONFERENCE ON OCTOBER 27.

8. THE POLITBIURO AT ITS OCTOBER 28 SESSION APPROVED
MEASURES TO ENSURE INCREASED MARKET SUPPLIES TO MEET
EXPANDED CONSUMER DEMAND DURING THE UPCOMING HOLIDAY
PERIOD. SUBSEQUENT PRESS COMMENTARY HAS STRESSED THE
LEADERSHIP'S EFFORTS TO ANTICIPATE THIS PROBLEM AND
TO KEEP CONSUMER INTERESTS UPPERMOST. ADDITIONALLY, THE
PRESS HAS CRITICIZED ENTERPRISES THAT HAVE ALLEGEDLY
MISUSED CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS AND PURCHASING POWERS TO
THE DETRIMENT OF CONSUMERS THEY ARE SUPPOSEDLY SERVING.
THE EFFECT OF SUCH CAMPAIGNS IS TO SHIFT BLAME AWAY
FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

9. NEVERTHELESS, THE LEADERSHIP DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE DECIDED THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION UNDERLYING MUCH PUBLIC CONCER: THE FUTURE WAGE-PRICE STRUCTURE. UNTIL IT DOES, WE EXPECT PUBLIC UNEASINESS TO CONTINUE. LACKING HARD INFORMATION ABOUT FURNITURE PRICE RISES, FOR EXAMPLE, REASONABLE PEOPLE MUST CONSIDER BUYING IMMEDIATELY WHEN THEY HEAR RUMORS OF IMPENDING INCREASES. GIEREK HAD RECENTLY CITED HIGHER FURNITURE DEMAND AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PROBLEMS CREATED BY THE REGIME'S OWN SUCCESS IN EXPANDING HOUSING CONSTRUCTION IN THE PAST
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PAGE 02 WARSAW 07186 02 OF 02 010959Z

FOUR YEARS. IN THIS WAY, HE SEEMED TO BE ASKING THE PEOPLE TO REGARD THEIR CUP AS HALF FULL RATHER THAN HALF EMPTY, AS THEY ARE PRONE TO DO.

10. GIEREK HAS BEEN ADDRESSING THE PEOPLE INCREASINGLY IN THE RECENT WEEKS WITH A CAMPAIGN STYLE THAT, IN STYLE AND FREQUENCY, IF NOT SUBSTANCE, CLOSELY RESEMBLES WESTERN CAMPAIGNING. NOTWITHSTANDING COMPLAINTS THAT THE PEOPLE ARE STILL INSUFFICIENTLY INFORMED ABOUT POSSIBLE PRICE CHANGES AND THE LIKE, WE ARE IMPRESSED BY THE DEGREE TO WHICH GIEREK AND OTHER TOP LEADERS ARE ENGAGING IN FRANK AND OPEN DISCUSSION DURING THE PRE-CONGRESS PERIOD. THE CONGRESS WILL BE WELL-PREPARED, OF COURSE, AND, BARRING AN UNTOWARD INCIDENT THAT MIGHT PROVOKE THE AUTHORITIES INTO OVER-REACTION, WE HAVE LITTLE DOUBT THAT IT WILL ENDORSE GIEREK'S LEADERSHIP.

11. GIEREK AND HIS ASSOCIATES HAVE BEEN PROJECTING A RENEWED SENSE OF DIRECTION AND SELF-CONFIDENCE. THEY HAVE HANDLED THE PROBLEM OF PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF THE CSCE FINAL ACT WITHOUT CAUSING APPRECIABLE PUBLIC REACTION, AND ARE OVER THE HURDLE OF SIGNATURE OF THE PENSIONS, CLAIMS, AND RESETTLEMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE WEST GERMANS. THEY SEEM CONFIDENT THAT THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT WILL RATIFY THE DOCUMENT AND THAT POLISH-GERMAN RELATIONS WILL BE ABLE TO GO FORWARD (IF IT DOES NOT, THEY CAN EASILY REINSTATE THE FRG AS THE PRIME POLISH BOGEYMAN.) IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT THERE WAS SOME SOVIET CRITICISM OF THE INCREASED PACE AND INTENSITY OF POLAND'S ECONOMIC OPENING TO THE WEST (REF C) BUT THE RECENT APPOINTMENT OF WRZASZCZYK (REF D) AS PLANNING COMMISSION CHAIRMAN ARGUES STRONGLY THAT THE POLISH LEADERS NOW HAVE SOVIET APPROVAL, EVEN IF GRUDGING. AS FAR AS THE ECONOMIC SITUATION GOES, THERE IS NOT DOUBT THAT THEY ARE WALKING A TIGHT-ROPE BUT THEY HAVE BEEN DOING THIS ADROITLY FOR SOME TIME. THEY OBVIOUSLY BELIEVE

THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE THIS ACT AND WE HAVE NO
REASON TO DOUBT THE VALIDITY OF THIS JUDGEMENT.
DAVIES

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